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WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING
OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES
AND PEOPLES

NEW CALEDONIA

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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I. GENERAL

1. New Caledonia is located in the Pacific Ocean, about 1,500 kilometres east of Australia and 1,700 kilometres north of New Zealand. It comprises one large island, known as Grande Terre, and several smaller islands. To the east of Grande Terre are the Loyalty Islands (Ouvéa, Maré, Lifou and Tiga); to the north, the Bélep Archipelago; and to the south, the Isle of Pines and Huon Island. There are also several uninhabited islands to the north of the Loyalty Islands. The area of Grande Terre is 16,750 square kilometres and that of all the islands combined, 19,103 square kilometres. Nouméa, the capital, is located in the south of Grande Terre.

2. According to the 1989 census, the population was 164,173, comprising 73,598 indigenous Melanesians known as Kanaks (44.8 per cent); 55,085 persons of European origin, mainly French (33.6 per cent), of whom 35,000 persons, known as Caldoches, are descendants of the early settlers; 18,936 Wallisians and Tahitians (11.5 per cent); and 16,554 others, mainly Indonesians and Vietnamese (10.1 per cent). It is estimated that in 1991 the population was 170,000 persons.

3. Under the Matignon Agreements of 1988, the Territory is divided into three provinces, the South and the North (on Grande Terre) and the Loyalty Islands. Each province has an elected Assembly, which is responsible for local economic development, land reform and cultural affairs. Together, the members of the assemblies constitute the Territorial Congress, which is responsible for the territorial budget and fiscal affairs, infrastructure and primary education. The presidents of the assemblies, along with the President of the Territorial Congress and the French High Commissioner, form the territorial executive. Local government is conducted by 32 municipalities. 1/

4. In order to safeguard Kanak tradition, there are also eight customary regions, each with its own Consultative Customary Council, as well as a Territory-wide Customary Council.

5. In the French National Assembly, New Caledonia is represented by two popularly elected deputies, as well as by one Senator and one Councillor for Economic and Social Affairs. The Territory is represented in the European Parliament. 2/

6. There are two principal political groupings and numerous small parties. The two main groupings are the Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République (RPCR), which favours retaining a relationship with France and the Front de libération nationale kanake socialiste (FLNKS), a coalition of parties that favour independence from France. The constituents of FLNKS include the Parti de libération kanak (PALIKA), the Parti socialiste calédonien (PSC), the Union calédonienne (UC) and the Union progressiste mélanésienne. 3/

7. Elections were held in 1988. RPCR controls the Provincial Assembly of the South and, by virtue of its representation in the other two assemblies, half of the 54 seats in the Territorial Congress. RPCR members represent New Caledonia in the French National Assembly and Senate. FLNKS controls the provincial assemblies in the North and in the Loyalty Islands and has 19 seats in the Territorial Congress.

8. The Matignon Agreements (see A/AC.109/1000, paras. 9-14) provide for a self-determination referendum to be held in 1998, following a 10-year period of development during which efforts would be concentrated on effecting a more equitable economic distribution among the three provinces and providing education and training that would enable Kanaks to participate equally in the economy and Government of the Territory.

II. CONSIDERATION BY THE UNITED NATIONS

A. Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

9. The Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples considered the question of New Caledonia at its 1403rd and 1406th to 1409th meetings, between 22 and 30 July 1992. During its consideration of the item, the Special Committee had before it a working paper prepared by the Secretariat containing information on developments concerning the Territory (A/AC.109/1120).

10. At its 1406th and 1407th meetings, on 28 July and at its 1408th meeting on 29 July, the Committee heard statements from several petitioners. The representative of the Solomon Islands made a statement on behalf of the nine members countries of the South Pacific Forum (A/AC.109/PV.1408). At the 1409th meeting, on 30 July, the representative of Papua New Guinea made a statement in the course of which he introduced, on behalf also of Fiji, draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1787. At the same meeting, the Special Committee adopted that draft resolution by consensus without a vote.

11. By that resolution the Special Committee, noting the importance of the positive measures being pursued in New Caledonia by the French authorities, to promote political, economic and social developments in the Territory, welcomed, inter alia, the call by the Committee to Monitor the Matignon Agreements, at its meeting in Paris in October 1991, for greater progress in housing, employment, training, education and health care in New Caledonia; and commended the decision to establish a Melanesian cultural centre as a contribution to preserving the indigenous culture of New Caledonia.

12. On 6 August 1992, the text of the resolution (A/AC.109/1133) was transmitted to the Permanent Representative of France for the attention of his Government.

13. In accordance with its previous decision, the Special Committee recommended to the General Assembly the adoption of the draft resolution contained in document A/AC.109/1133 on New Caledonia during its consideration of the item at its forty-seventh session.

B. General Assembly

14. In their statements in the general debate at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the following delegations referred to the question of New Caledonia: Solomon Islands (A/47/PV.27), Fiji and Papua New Guinea (A/47/PV.30).

15. During the general debate in the Fourth Committee, the Committee heard two petitioners on the question of New Caledonia on 19 October 1992: Mr. Paul Néaoutyine, on behalf of FLNKS, and Mr. Jean-Paul Tidjine, on behalf of the Congrès Populaire Kanak (A/C.4/47/SR.5, paras. 4-19).

16. Several delegations made reference to the question of New Caledonia under the agenda item on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

17. Speaking on behalf of the nine member countries of the South Pacific Forum that are Members of the United Nations - Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Republic of the Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Western Samoa, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands - the representative of Solomon Islands stressed that decolonization had a particular place in the deliberations of the South Pacific Forum, given that South Pacific Islands figured prominently among the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. He mentioned that at their meeting earlier in the year, Heads of Government of the Forum member countries had paid special attention to New Caledonia. They had noted the positive measures being pursued in New Caledonia by the French authorities, in cooperation with all sectors of the population to promote equitable political, economic and social development so as to provide a framework for the Territory's peaceful evolution to self-determination. He went on to say that the Forum had been encouraged by the continuing progress made in the implementation of the Matignon Agreements (A/C.4/47/SR.6, paras. 27 and 28).

18. Speaking also on behalf of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela, the representative of Argentina referred also to the question of New Caledonia. In that regard, he stated that those countries considered that dialogue between the parties was the most appropriate method of finding just solutions and adopting the necessary measures to ensure that, within the framework of the Matignon Agreements, the inhabitants of New Caledonia would be able to exercise their right to self-determination under the best possible conditions in 1998 (A/C.4/47/SR.4, para. 62).

19. For his part, the representative of Australia stated that, as a South Pacific nation, Australia attached particular importance to the situation in New Caledonia. The decolonization of New Caledonia, he stated, "represents a particularly complex decolonization situation, requiring sensitivity, cooperation and goodwill by all parties involved ... Australia believes that the interests of New Caledonia and of regional stability require a peaceful, orderly transition to genuine self-determination in which all options, including independence, would be open, and which would safeguard the rights of the indigenous Kanaks and those of all other New Caledonians ... Australia has been much encouraged by the achievements recorded over the last four years under the Matignon Accords ..." (A/C.4/47/SR.7, para. 54).

20. The French delegation, speaking as the administering Power of New Caledonia, stated, inter alia, that for more than four years New Caledonia had been experiencing a profoundly changed economic, political and social climate which could not have emerged if the spirit of openness had not prevailed over confrontation and violence. The dialogue between the parties had led to the signing of the Matignon and Oudinot Agreements which were based on three main principles: the right to self-determination, decentralization, land redistribution, and the economic and social development of the Territory (A/C.4/47/SR.6, para. 1).

21. After more than four years, the representative of France continued, the spirit of the Matignon and Oudinot Agreements remained unaltered. The French authorities were determined to ensure that in 1998 the inhabitants of New Caledonia would be able to exercise their right to self-determination under the best possible conditions (A/C.4/47/SR.6, para. 8).

22. At the same meeting, the representative of New Zealand also stated that he fully endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Solomon Islands on behalf of the States members of the South Pacific Forum. The attitude of the various parties, he said, was very encouraging (A/C.4/47/SR.6, para. 56).

23. On the same subject, the representative of the Philippines welcomed the measures being pursued by the French authorities to promote equitable political, economic and social development, and took note of the progress made in the implementation of the Matignon Agreements (A/C.4/47/SR.6, para. 64).

24. For his part, the representative of Papua New Guinea, endorsing the position of the South Pacific Forum countries as set out in the Final Communiqué of the Twenty-third South Pacific Forum (A/47/391, annex) expressed the hope that New Caledonia would achieve self-determination and independence as soon as possible, with the active involvement of the United Nations, and in accordance with the wishes of the Kanaks and their representatives as well as all the people of New Caledonia (A/C.4/47/SR.8, para. 38).

25. At its 8th meeting, on 3 November 1992, the Fourth Committee adopted, by consensus, the draft resolution submitted by the Special Committee concerning New Caledonia.

III. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

A. Meeting of the Committee to Monitor the Matignon Agreements

26. The Committee to Monitor the Matignon Agreements, composed of the three parties to New Caledonia's peace accords, namely, the French Government, RPCR and FLNKS, met for the fourth time from 2 to 4 February 1993, in Paris, in order to review the progress of the Matignon Agreements. 4/

27. The three parties agreed that, during the period under review, overall progress had been made. 4/

28. At the review meeting, the main concern of FLNKS was the question of electoral reform and the choices to be offered in the 1998 referendum. Those,

FLNKS emphasized, were pivotal elements in their signature of the accords in 1988. It pointed out that owing to heavy settlement encouraged by past French Governments, Kanaks numbered only 45 per cent of the population. 4/ The Matignon Agreements stipulate that, only those who were eligible to vote in the 1988 referendum which established the peace process and who remain continuously domiciled in New Caledonia, as well as their children born in New Caledonia and who reach the voting age, are to be eligible to vote in the crucial 1998 referendum.

29. At the review meeting, Mr. Paul Néaoutyine, the leader of FLNKS, complained that a special roll was to have been established and be updated regularly. That, he said, had not been done. FLNKS was fearful that without adequate controls many more would vote in the 1998 referendum. 4/

30. The FLNKS delegation noted that the construction of the Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre, which is one of the great commitments of the French State, was an important step forward. 4/

31. Mr. Jacques Lafleur, leader of RPCR also expressed fears concerning the referendum, which he said could be a "guillotine that kills all hope of discussion". He said that he would prefer to see a consensus to forego the referendum and have the peace plan prolonged. Mr. Lafleur stressed the importance of preserving the spirit of understanding, including the way that choices on the Territory's future were approached. 4/

32. Speaking on behalf of the Government, Mr. Louis Le Pensec, then Minister for Overseas Departments and Territories, pointed out that there were three types of problems to be addressed in the wake of the dramatic events of 1988. First, he said, the wounds caused by the period of conflict needed to be healed; secondly, there was a need to reduce progressively the economic and social handicaps; and thirdly, problems related to urban segregation, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse among the young required attention as a matter of priority. 4/

33. Turning to the future, Mr. Le Pensec said that areas in which more progress was necessary were education, the nickel mining sector and regional links. 4/

34. As far as education was concerned, the review meeting concluded that more effort should be made to adapt the education system to the needs of the Kanaks, and to build schools (see paras. 93-95). 4/

35. The meeting praised the work done in the field of regional cooperation by territorial leaders and by the French High Commissioner. It stated that the French University of the Pacific needed to have more links with Melanesian countries and with the University of the South Pacific at Suva. 4/

36. At the review meeting it was decided that officials from the provincial governments would be involved in immigration control, which was the responsibility of the French Government. At its last Congress earlier in the year, FLNKS had expressed concern regarding a lack of adequate controls over immigration and the importance of such controls to the referendum in 1998. 4/

37. The meeting determined that television coverage should focus more on local events and that the recruitment of Kanak and other local journalists should be accelerated. 4/

38. In the economic development field, a free trade zone and port at Nepuoi on the west coast of the Territory was to be developed. Minister Le Pensec confirmed that France would finance the project when feasibility studies were finalized. It was also decided that New Caledonia's economy should be diversified, air links should be improved and that the marine zone should be transferred from State to local jurisdiction. 4/

39. In his address to the meeting on 4 February 1993, Mr. Pierre Bérégovoy, Prime Minister of France, reiterated the Government's commitment to provide annually a total of 1.65 billion French francs or 30 billion Communauté financière du Pacifique francs (CFPF) 5/ to be distributed to all three provinces, in accordance with the distribution criteria established by the law of referendum. As part of its concern over the efficiency of the teaching system, the Prime Minister said that the Government would increase its contribution by 15 million French francs towards the construction of lycées in New Caledonia. Education efforts could not be limited only to the training of high-level cadres. 6/

40. In his intervention on 4 February 1993, regarding the signing of the contracts on development between the State and the three Provinces, Mr. Le Pensec stated, inter alia, that the contracts were a direct result of the Matignon Agreements and of the law of referendum. They represented a financial commitment of 3.25 billion French francs for the period from 1993 to 1997, with the development of the Northern Province to be given priority. He further stated that in conformity with the obligation, the State had committed itself during the said period to the amount of 1.65 billion French francs for the contracts. 7/

41. Underlining the importance of the realization of those contracts, Mr. Le Pensec concluded by saying that the realization of those contracts had three essential objectives, namely, creation of wealth for the development of economic activities, equal distribution of that wealth in order progressively to eliminate old imbalances, and the improvement of living conditions of the population, particularly disadvantaged ones. 7/

B. Other developments

42. As provided for in the Matignon Agreements, New Caledonia is represented in the French National Assembly by two popularly elected deputies. As a result of the recently held parliamentary elections in France, Mr. Jacques Lafleur, leader of RPCR, was re-elected with 53.2 per cent in the first round of voting. Eight others had contested the seat, including Mr. Rock Wamytan, Vice-President of FLNKS who polled 14.3 per cent. 8/

43. In the second seat, the incumbent RPCR candidate, Mr. Maurice Nenou, won with 54.1 per cent of the votes against FLNKS candidate Mr. Léopold Jorédié, who polled 29.8 per cent in the field of six candidates. 8/

44. On 18 May 1993, Mr. Dominique Perben, the new Minister for Overseas Departments and Territories, received in Paris a delegation composed of Mr. Léopold Jorédié, president of New Caledonia's Northern Province, Mr. Richard Kaloi, president of the Islands Province and Mr. François Burk, president of L'Union Calédonienne, the main component of FLNKS. Speaking to the press after the meeting, the delegation indicated that it had received guarantees that the Matignon Agreements would continue to be respected and that the funds allocated in the development contracts would be maintained. 9/

45. In an interview granted to Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes prior to a visit to New Caledonia, Mr. Perben reiterated the position of the French Government, namely, that the future of New Caledonia depended on consultations held by the respective parties in New Caledonia. The Minister added that if they wished to consult him he would be available. In no instance, however, would his Government interfere with the internal process in New Caledonia. The Minister regretted the delays in remitting to the Territory funds for development projects in conformity with the Matignon Agreements, and said that he had taken steps to speed up the process. Within that framework, he had made contact with his government colleagues in the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Education and Environment to urge them to dispatch promptly the necessary funds. 10/

46. Mr. Perben visited New Caledonia from 14 to 16 June 1993, on the first leg of a two-week trip to the South Pacific, which included a visit to Wallis and Futuna and to French Polynesia. In an interview with the press, Mr. Perben stated that he was conveying a message from Mr. Edouard Balladur, the new Prime Minister of France, affirming his will to pursue France's policy of dialogue with all the partners and of more equitable economic distribution among the three provinces. His first remarks upon his arrival in the Territory confirmed that the French Government "was determined to pursue without any ambiguity the policy outlined in the Matignon Agreements". Mr. Perben went on to say that everyone, whatever his political leanings, must know that he was available for dialogue. 11/

47. Mr. Perben visited the three provinces successively (the South, the North and the Loyalty Islands) where he held consultations with political leaders, elected representatives of the political parties and the traditional chiefs. According to press reports, party leaders, including some elected representatives of FLNKS, said that they were appreciative of the frankness and openness of the statements made by Mr. Perben. 11/

48. During his stay at Nouméa, Mr. Perben received several delegations of political parties at the residence of the High Commissioner. Following the meeting with Mr. Perben, Mr. Joseph Pidjot, who headed the delegation of the Consultative Customary Council, reportedly stated that the discussions had centred mainly on difficulties encountered by the Council and on the land issue. The delegation of RPCR which was headed by Mr. Pierre Frogier is reported to have assured the Minister of its full cooperation and support. According to press reports, the delegation of FLNKS which was headed by Mr. Paul Néaoutyine, for its part, expressed the wish to maintain with the new Government the same relations of dialogue and transparency with regard to their respective positions as well as their realization and concerns about the question of equitable economic distribution. Mr. Néaoutyine further stated that the economic readjustment process should be conducted in a spirit of real decolonization. He

added, however, referring to the statement of the Minister, that his delegation was reassured to note that the Government did not intend to disrupt the process in progress. 11/

C. Official visits

49. It was reported that Mr. Maxime Carlot Korman, Prime Minister of Vanuatu, paid an official visit to New Caledonia in April 1993. One of the purposes of the week-long visit was to open the Vanuatu Consulate at Nouméa where, reportedly, several thousands of Vanuatu citizens live. While in New Caledonia, the Prime Minister had a meeting with Mr. Alain Christnacht, French High Commissioner to New Caledonia, and heads of all New Caledonian public service departments. 12/

50. During the said meeting, it was decided to set up a joint committee that would meet every three months in either country to oversee cooperation projects. Mr. Korman also met with the leaders of each of New Caledonia's three provinces, as well as leaders of the Rally for Caledonia in the Republic and the Union Calédonienne. Mr. Paul Néaoutyine, President of FLNKS, declined an invitation for talks with the Prime Minister, however. 12/

51. It was also reported that Mr. John Kaputin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea, paid a five-day visit to New Caledonia in early April. The purpose of the visit was largely to examine the progress of the Matignon Agreements, as well as to explore the possibilities for scientific and cultural cooperation with New Caledonia. 13/

IV. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

A. General

52. The basis of New Caledonia's economy is the nickel industry, which accounts for most of the Territory's exports. Economic activities have for the most part been concentrated in the Southern Province where the capital, Nouméa, is located and where most inhabitants of European origin live.

53. In order to remedy such a situation and to ensure a more balanced economic development of all the regions of the Territory, the Matignon Agreements provide for a series of measures, including the decentralization and regionalization of a number of economic activities, as well as the launching of regional development programmes whose objectives are to meet the specific needs of each province.

54. In this connection, during the meeting of the Committee to Monitor the Matignon Agreements held in Paris in February 1993 (see paras. 26-41), the parties to the Agreements signed development contracts aimed at investing a total of 1.65 billion French francs in the economy of the Territory for the period from 1993 to 1997, representing an annual increase of more than 10 per cent as compared to previous contributions. In conformity with the spirit of the Matignon Agreements, approximately 75 per cent of that amount will be spent on various development projects in the Northern Province and the

Islands Province, while the Southern Province will receive 25 per cent. 14/ The priorities for the new contracts are social development, housing, initial training, development of the infrastructure and economic development.

B. Trade

Exports

55. New Caledonia's external trade is dominated by its chief commodity export, nickel. In 1992, New Caledonia exported 3.735 million metric tons of merchandise valued at CFPF 39,448 million. In volume, exports increased by 14.3 per cent, while in value they decreased by 14.1 per cent from 1991. According to Bulletin de Conjoncture for 1992, in volume, 96.1 per cent of exports consisted of nickel minerals. This represents an increase of 14.5 per cent from 1991. 4/

56. The most important mineral export in value for 1992 was ferro-nickel, which represented 52.6 per cent of total exports. 15/

Imports

57. In 1992, total imports amounted to CFPF 89,160 million, an increase of 0.4 per cent in value over 1991. In volume, imports took an inverse evolution: 878,400 metric tons of merchandise in 1992 as compared to 921,600 metric tons in 1991, representing 4.7 per cent decrease. 14/

58. The Territory's main imports for 1992 were: machines, equipment and electrical materials (20.3 per cent in value), food products (17 per cent) and transport materials (16.9 per cent).

59. The balance of trade for 1992 shows a deficit of CFPF 49,712 million (see table 1). This deficit is considerably higher than in the previous years. 14/

60. In 1992, New Caledonia's main trading partners in terms of imports were France and the European Economic Community (EEC) (excluding France). Imports from France represented 46.3 per cent of total imports and amounted to CFPF 41,294 million, an increase of 1.8 per cent over 1991 figures. The second was EEC (excluding France) with 14.9 per cent of total imports amounting to CFPF 13,307 million. Others, in order of importance, were Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States of America. 15/

61. In a related development, it has been reported that the French Government has been looking into the possibility of establishing a free trade zone within its South Pacific Territories, including New Caledonia. 16/ The move was one of several decided upon at a meeting of senior French military and civilian officials and elected representatives, held at Nouméa under the chairmanship of Mr. Louis Le Pensec, then Minister for Overseas Departments and Territories. The meeting called for continued foreign trade liberalization where New Caledonia is concerned and the speeding up of animal and plant health agreements with countries in the region to facilitate farm produce trade. The meeting urged that consideration be given to encouraging investment in New Caledonia. 16/

Table 1. Balance of trade

(Millions of CFP francs)

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Imports	59 832	63 353	65 395	88 608	86 929	88 798	89 160
Exports	23 573	20 653	50 814	77 900	47 031	45 917	39 448
Negative trade balance	-35 809	-42 700	-14 581	-10 708	-39 898	-42 881	-49 712

Source: Institut territorial de la statistique et des études économiques, Bulletin de Conjoncture, No. 32, fourth quarter 1990, pp. 10.5 and 10.6; ibid., No. 36, fourth quarter 1991, pp. 10.3 and 10.4; and ibid. No. 40, fourth quarter 1992, p. 10.4.

62. It was also reported that a group of 35 Australian industrialists, the highest level ever Australian trade delegation to visit New Caledonia, visited the Territory late in 1992, in order to explore trade possibilities. The move was facilitated by the relaxation of the Territory's import regulations. 17/

63. Press reports stated that, early in 1993, a zone of gold mineralization had been identified some 60 kilometres north of Nouméa. Samples taken show potential gold valued at between 17 grams and 45 grams per ton. New Caledonia has long been known for its rich resources in a variety of minerals. Practically all the attention was turned to the exploitation of only one mineral however, nickel, which, in its heyday accounted for 99 per cent of the value of New Caledonia's exports. The new discovery, known as the KOUM gold project has caused some excitement. 17/

C. Agriculture

64. Agriculture plays a relatively minor role in the economy of New Caledonia, although an estimated 34 per cent of the population, primarily Kanaks, depends on it.

65. Some 95 per cent of agriculturally productive land is mainly used for raising cattle and pigs. Maize, potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, coconuts, cassava, vegetables and fruits are the principal crops in the Territory. 18/

66. In 1989, the Land and Rural Development Agency was established as a public industrial and commercial organization which was to participate in rural development.

67. According to reports, New Caledonia has sent its first shipment of meat produce to Australia, under accords on agricultural produce signed with Australia and New Zealand in August 1992. The accords allow New Caledonia to export livestock produce, fruits and vegetables to the two countries. 19/

D. Fisheries

68. Ocean fishing has been of relatively little economic importance to the Territory. The main fisheries products are tuna (most of which are exported to Japan) and shrimp. In 1992, a total of 125.7 metric tons of fish, valued at CFPF 46.9 million, were exported as compared to 143.9 metric tons valued at CFPF 57.4 million in 1991. 15/

69. The total catch of shrimp in 1992 was a little over 700 metric tons, 9 per cent more than that of 1991. Of this, 434.5 metric tons of shrimp valued at CFPF 455.8 million were exported. France, followed by Australia and Japan, were the main importers of the Territory's shrimp. 15/

E. Mining

70. New Caledonia possesses the world's largest known nickel deposits, accounting for about 30 per cent of the world's known reserves. It has the third largest nickel production and supplies about 9 per cent of world nickel matte and ore requirements. 18/

71. In 1992, 39,370 metric tons of ferro-nickel and nickel matte were produced. Ferro-nickel represented more than half (51 per cent) of the exports in value, followed by nickel matte, with the main customers being France and Japan. France has declared nickel a strategic material and maintains strict control over mining. 18/ According to the Bulletin de Conjoncture for 1992, mineral production in 1992 has been generally equivalent to that of 1991. Production estimates for the first quarter of 1993 are higher than those of the preceding years, as a result of the favourable climatic conditions. 15/

72. Annual production of nickel at Kopeto, near Nepoui, in the Northern Province, was due to begin in 1992, and was projected at 15,000 metric tons. 18/

73. The signing of an agreement in mid-1991 between Societé le Nickel (SLN) and a Japanese steel company secured the purchase of 5,000 metric tons of nickel from the Territory annually for the years 1994 to 2004. 18/

74. It was decided by the review meeting to monitor the Matignon Agreements held in February 1993 (see paras. 26-41), that a study would be conducted on gaining local participation in the SLN nickel company. The importance of the sale in 1990 by Mr. Jacques Lafleur of his huge nickel company, the South Pacific Mining Company (SMSP), to the Northern Province was recognized as an important step in the economic rebalancing of the Territory. According to the review meeting, SMSP has been very profitable and in 1992 enabled the Northern Province to become the largest hotel owners in New Caledonia 4/ (see paras. 81-85).

F. Transport and communications

75. New Caledonia has one of the best air and road networks in the South Pacific. There is an international airport, Tontouta, 47 kilometres from Nouméa, and an internal network, centred on Magenta airport, which provides air services linking Nouméa to other towns and islands. 18/

76. Most maritime traffic in New Caledonia is through the port of Nouméa. Passenger and cargo services, linking Nouméa to other towns and islands, are regular and frequent. There are plans to develop Nepoui, in the Province of the North, as a deep-water port and industrial centre. During the review meeting to monitor the Matignon Agreements (see paras. 26-41), then Minister Le Pensec confirmed that France would finance the development of the port at Nepoui when feasibility studies were completed.

G. Tourism

77. Tourism is seen as the second most important sector of the economy after nickel mining. In December 1992, Mr. Jean-Michel Baylet, French Minister-delegate for Tourism, visited New Caledonia. During his stay in the Territory, Mr. Baylet was reported to have told reporters that while nickel had been the pillar of the Territory's economy, tourism had become the most promising sector for diversification. 20/ He was also reported to have stated that his meetings with Kanak Custom authorities, tourism professionals and both political and economic leaders had shown a unity in the desire to promote New Caledonia's economy through harmonious tourist development. 20/

78. According to Bulletin de Conjoncture, in 1992, 80,840 tourists visited New Caledonia as compared to 83,524 in 1991, a decrease of 3.2 per cent. This was a second consecutive year of decrease in tourism since 1990 which registered 86,870 tourists. 15/

79. The Japanese constituted the most important group of tourists in New Caledonia in 1992, representing 32.8 per cent of the total tourists, followed by the French (29.7 per cent) and Australians (16.9 per cent) (see table 2). 15/

80. In 1992, 67 cruise ships visited New Caledonia and 48,740 passengers disembarked, as against 38 ships and 36,997 passengers in 1991. 15/

81. It has been reported 21/ that the Northern Province of New Caledonia, controlled by FLNKS, has purchased a majority shareholding in Socaba which owns two hotels, including the Territory's largest hotel and the Casino Royale. The 53 per cent shareholding makes the province the largest hotel owner in the Territory. According to the report, the purchase was made through the Tourism Investment Company (CIT), a subsidiary of the South Pacific Mining Company (SMSP) which was acquired by the Territory from Mr. Lafleur, leader of RPCR. 21/

Table 2. Number of tourists, 1989-1992

	1989	1990	1991	1992
Japanese	27 358	28 781	25 675	26 484
French	21 054	22 638	23 807	23 977
Australians	13 974	14 066	14 167	13 699
New Zealanders	7 411	9 378	8 908	7 575
Others	12 364	12 007	10 967	9 105
	82 161	86 870	83 524	80 840

Source: Institut territorial de la statistique et des études économiques, Bulletin de Conjoncture, No. 32, fourth quarter 1990, p. 4.5; ibid., No. 36, fourth quarter 1991, p. 4.4; and ibid., No. 40, fourth quarter 1992, p. 4.5-4.6.

82. The transaction has reportedly disturbed Mr. Lafleur as the hotels and casino are in Nouméa in the Southern Province. He has described the purchase as "unacceptable" and as a "perversion of the Matignon Accords". 20/ The funds supplied from the Territory's budget to the government of the less developed Northern Province are, in his view, for the development of infrastructure and the encouragement of investment in that province, not for the takeover of investments in the south.

83. This view was contested, however, by the Northern Province which argued that ownership of those properties in the south could become a springboard enabling the north to develop its own tourism and offer viable packages of split holidays in both parts of the country. 21/

84. A statement released by the chief executive of CIT clarified that the investment was made "as part of an international strategy to harmonize tourism development of the interior and the islands using Nouméa, the natural entry point of visitors to the Territory". 21/

85. According to the same reports, Accor, which is the world's leading French hotel group, plans to make New Caledonia an important part of its Asia-Pacific development by allowing CIT, which owns the Malabo Beach Hotel and the Koulnoue Village Club Mediterranée in the Northern Province, to benefit from the quality hotel links at Nouméa.

V. SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS

A. Labour

86. Labour relations in New Caledonia are governed by the Code du Travail of 1982, as modified in 1986, which applies to all French Overseas Territories. There is a guaranteed minimum wage and there are a number of labour unions, including USTKE and the Union des syndicats ouvriers et employés de Nouvelle-Calédonie (USOENC).

87. According to the Bulletin de Conjoncture of 1992 unemployment has grown. In 1992, 3,887 persons were unemployed, an increase of 18 per cent over 1991 figures. Of the total unemployed, 64.2 per cent were in the Southern Province, 25.7 per cent in the Northern Province and 10.1 per cent in the Loyalty Islands. 15/

88. During the review meeting to monitor the Matignon Agreements (see paras. 26-41), it was pointed out that in three years since its signing, there had been favourable trends regarding labour force. Those trends included 8,404 new jobs, nearly three quarters of which were in the private sector, with the greater rate of increase being in Northern and Loyalty Island Provinces. 17/

89. Nouméa, which is located in the Southern Province, still has 88 per cent of the work force, so that any increase that occurs in the other provinces seems significant. For instance, in the Loyalty Islands Province, the salary-earning population increased by 183 per cent. There are now a recorded 920 salary earners in the Loyalty Islands, which have a population of 18,000. 17/

B. Public health

90. As previously reported (A/AC.109/1120), in 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, there were 226 medical practitioners, 22 dentists and 18 pharmacists in public service in the Territory. During that year, the ratio was one doctor to 460 inhabitants in Nouméa and one to 2,097 outside the capital. In 1988, medical personnel in private practice comprised 99 doctors, 28 dentists and 29 pharmacists. Most of them were based in and around Nouméa.

C. Educational conditions

91. Education in New Caledonia is free and compulsory for children between 6 and 14 years of age and is offered in the French language. Schools are operated by both the State and churches under the supervision of the Department of Education.

92. In 1990, the latest year for which information is available, in both pre-primary and primary schools, there were 279 schools, 1,696 teachers and 34,242 pupils. There were 74 secondary schools, of which 43 were general and 31 vocational, with 1,630 teachers and 21,000 pupils, while there were five institutions for higher learning, with 66 teachers and 1,007 students. 18/

93. At its annual meeting in Paris in February 1993 (see paras. 33-35 and 39), the review meeting to monitor the Matignon Agreements considered the question of education in New Caledonia, and concluded that more effort should be made to adapt the educational system to the needs of Kanaks and to building more schools.

94. The "operation 400 cadres", an accelerated training programme which produces senior and middle-ranking public servants, was deemed by the review meeting as an undeniable success.

95. In that regard, it was reported that currently there were 166 recruits in the programme, most of whom were Kanak, and that 63 had already returned to New Caledonia after successful training. The review meeting decided further to focus on the training of intermediate cadres for the private sector and to open the scheme up to trainees for the education sector. The meeting also decided to pursue more vigorously the teaching of, and in, Kanak languages. The meeting decided that the education system should be more open to the South Pacific with the aim of facilitating the recognition of degrees and diplomas.

Notes

1/ The Europa World Year Book 1992, vol. I, p. 1147.

2/ Ibid., p. 1146.

3/ Ibid., p. 1148.

4/ Pacific Report, vol. 6, No. 3, 22 February 1993.

5/ The local currency of the Territory is the CFP (Communanté financière du Pacifique) franc. In 1992, 100 CPF francs were equivalent to 5.5 French francs.

6/ Speech by Mr. Pierre Bérégovoy, Prime Minister, at the Quatrième Comité du Suivi des Accords de Matignon, 4 February 1993.

7/ Speech by Mr. Louis Le Pensec, Minister of Overseas Departments and Overseas Territories, on signature of development agreements between the State and the three provinces of New Caledonia, 4 February 1993.

8/ Pacific Report, vol. 6, No. 6, 5 April 1993.

9/ Le Bulletin Quotidien, 19 May 1993.

10/ Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes, 11 June 1993.

11/ Le Monde (Paris), 15 June 1993.

12/ Pacific Report, vol. 6, No. 8, 3 May 1993.

13/ Ibid., No. 7, 13 April 1993.

Notes (continued)

14/ Ibid., No. 3, 22 February 1993; see also Bilan du Quatrième Comité de Suivi des Accords de Matignon.

15/ Institut territorial de la statistique et des études économiques, Bulletin de Conjoncture, No. 40, fourth quarter 1992.

16/ Pacific Report, vol. 5, No. 18, 17 September 1992.

17/ Pacific Magazine, January-February 1993, p. 32.

18/ The Far East and Australasia, 24th ed., Europa Publications, Ltd., 1993.

19/ South Pacific-Radio Australia News Summary, 24 August 1992; see also Pacific Report, vol. 5, No. 17, 3 September 1992.

20/ Pacific Report, 14 December 1992.

21/ The Economist Intelligence Unit: Pacific Islands Country Report No. 1, 1993; see also Le Monde (Paris), 4 November 1992; and Islands Business Pacific, Sydney, November 1992.